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ABSTRACT

Redesign of teacher education is not a process to be undertaken except in response to carefully identified goals and objectives. It is essential to involve, in every phase of the process, those who will be most affected by the redesign effort. Prior to undertaking the task of redesign or reform however, it is important to identify the source of the impetus for change. This source may be external or internal, but it is usually a combination of the two. While identifying the impetus for change is important, it is more important to ascertain that change is the appropriate response. Certain questions should be asked at this point. Once the redesign decision has been made, it becomes necessary to identify those internal change strategies which will be most effective. These strategies can be thought of as a series of steps to be followed which involve: (1) identification of the problem; (2) development of a needs assessment; (3) design of a plan of action; (4) identification of facilitators; (5) identification of resources; (6) identification of timelines; (7) evaluation of change efforts; and (8) identification of alternatives. This series of internal change strategies has been used effectively at many American colleges and universities. (JMK)

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THIRTIETH WORLD ASSEMBLY

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON EDUCATION FOR TEACHING

WASHINGTON, D.C.

JULY 11 - 15, 1983

REDESIGN OF TEACHER EDUCATION: INTERNAL CHANGE STRATEGIES

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Introduction

The fact that this Thirtieth World Assembly of the International Council on Education for Teaching has as its theme "The Redesign of Teacher Education for the Twenty First Century" is evidence that growth and change in teacher education are to be viewed as part of an evolutionary process rather than as part of a revolutionary process. The knowledge base in teacher education has been developing as long as there have been teachers and will continue to develop, in response to the needs of society, well beyond the year 2000. Change, per se, is not the goal, but rather, growth, and the need to be responsive to problems and issues which develop as part of any evolutionary process.

Every teacher education program exists in a unique environment and differs in certain ways from other programs. It is this uniqueness that motivates us to be cautious when we discuss the redesign of teacher education. Those responsible for evaluating programs and identifying change strategies realize that while it is useful to borrow or adapt whatever seems meaningful from other programs, it is more important to respect and preserve the basic integrity of the existing program insofar as program philosophy and societal needs are concerned.

The pitfall to be avoided, I repeat, is the desire to change for the sake of change. In America today, a great deal of attention has been drawn to the issue of the need for excellence in our nation's elementary and secondary schools and, the need to change the way in which teachers are prepared. American teacher educators, while they must be sensitive to the call for reform, must also carefully analyze the problems which are being

identified by the would-be reformers and move with all deliberate speed to insure that changes in the way in which American teachers are to be prepared in the future will have their foundation in the developing knowledge base and not merely represent quick-fix measures intended to forestall critics.

Few in teacher education are opposed in principle to innovation or experimentation with new ideas or new programs. However, full-scale or revolutionary reform efforts may have the effect of alienating our more conservative colleagues and will probably be doomed to failure. Program redesign requires in astute use of formal and informal networks of influence so that all those who will be affected by change will be receptive to its merits.

My remarks today will focus upon internal change strategies which can be used to facilitate the redesign of teacher education programs. Realizing that redesign cannot be viewed as an isolated activity, insulated from external influences and change agents, I shall attempt to identify strategies which have been used within American colleges and universities to enhance the redesign process, with an understanding that these strategies are, in turn, subject to modification by external factors.

The Impetus for Change

Prior to undertaking the task of redesign or reform, it is important to identify the source of the impetus for change. This source may be external or internal, but it is usually a combination of the two. External motivators may include those critics whom I have already mentioned, accrediting bodies, certification boards, professionals outside of our institutions who evaluate our graduates, state or governmental mandates, and/or identified program

deficiencies vis-a-vis other models and/or the knowledge base.

Internal motivators usually include changes in institutional or program philosophy, the need to retrench in light of diminished resource allocation, formal and informal indicators of program merit, and/or, pressures from administrators, faculty and students.

While idenitfying the impetus for change is important, it is more important to ascertain that change is the appropriate response. Questions that might be asked at this point include:

- What are the alternatives to change?
- Would it be better to think in terms of program elimination?
- Are the resources necessary to effect change available?
- What support bases will need to be in place before change can be considered?

I use the terms change, reform, and redesign, interchangably, realizing that each has distinct meanings, but also sensing that redesign must encompass change and reform.

Once the redesign decision has been made, it becomes necessary to identify those internal change strategies which will be most effective. We can think of these strategies in terms of a series of steps to be followed:

1. Identification of the problem.
2. Development of a needs assessment.
3. Design of a plan of action.
4. Identification of facilitators.
5. Identification of resources.
6. Identification of timelines.
7. Evaluation of change efforts.
8. Identification of alternatives.

Careful consideration must be given to the implementation of each step. In addition, this type of strategic planning should include attention to another series of underlying considerations prior to initiating the redesign process:

- an internal analysis of program and faculty strengths;
- an internal analysis of program and faculty deficiencies;
- an analysis of institutional resources to support change;
- an analysis of the knowledge base for teacher education; and,
- an understanding of the implications of all phases of the plan.

Once assured that we have developed a solid foundation for the initiation of reform, we can then proceed to implement the steps which should insure successful realization of the redesign process.

Identification of the Problem

My remarks regarding the impetus for change could be repeated here as a preface to a discussion of this step. Change, reform and/or redesign are not processes which we undertake unless we have a sense that there is a gap between what is and what should be. In order to identify the problem, or elements of the program to be changed, it is essential to obtain input from both external and internal sources. Every attempt should be made to insure that this input is based on objective criteria such as formal evaluations of graduates and/or programs by qualified individuals and/or agencies. However, informal feedback from those within and outside the institution should not be discounted as a source of information in the process of problem identification.

Information derived from a review of the knowledge base for teacher education and analysis of programs in place in other institutions will also serve to provide a means whereby the deficiencies in our own programs can be identified. It is essential to involve as many individuals and/or agencies

as possible in this process so as to develop those formal and informal networks of influence which I alluded to earlier and build a base of support for the other steps to follow.

Development of a Needs Assessment

We realize that problem identification and the development of a needs assessment are two distinct processes. The purpose served by the needs assessment is to identify potential solutions to problems, and the needs assessment, to be effective, must be based on an analysis of the problems identified and represent a wide range of alternative responses.

Just as those who identified the problems associated with our program played a critical role which enabled them to develop a sense of ownership for the redesign process, so also must they be involved in the assessment of needs in order to insure a continued investment of energy and ideas.

As we work our way through this step, it is important to remind ourselves that, whenever needs are identified by both external and internal sources, it is then incumbent upon those of us who are responsible for teacher education programs to determine which needs are congruent with the philosophy of our school, college, or department of education, and which should receive highest priority in terms of greatest benefit to our students, institution and society.

It is at this point, after prioritizing needs, that we initiate a feasibility study in order to assess the potential for change. Factors which we must take into account include those mentioned earlier: faculty and program strengths and deficiencies, the availability of institutional resources to support change, the dictates of the knowledge base, and, an

understanding of the long-range implications of the total redesign process.

Only after determining that change is feasible, and that it is desirable, and, after identifying and prioritizing those needs that can be met, should we proceed to design a plan of action to effectuate change.

Design of a Plan of Action

A system of data collection, designed to provide input as we monitor all phases of the plan of action, must be put in place at this point. Decisions regarding continuation or dissolution of the plan can be made more readily when they can be based on objective criteria as part of the total data collection effort. These data will also provide us with invaluable information which can be used to justify institutional allocations of resources and satisfy the requirements of governmental and accrediting agencies.

The goals and objectives for our redesign effort must be developed in cooperation with those inside and outside of the institution who assisted in the identification of problems and needs. Later, we will discuss timelines; however, at this point, it is important to stress that goals and objectives must be tied to specific timelines for implementation.

Our plan of action should include a rationale for change which can be used to convince those who allocate resources that ours is a worthy effort. It also serves as a basis for presenting any deviation from the philosophical basis for our program as a means of reassuring students, faculty and administrators that ours is a reasoned response to existing problems.

Priorities for our redesign effort will be closely tied to the goals and objectives which we have identified and will be presented in a hierar-

chical pattern which, again, specifies timelines for achievement. Tied to the identification of priorities will be recommendations for structural and environmental changes which will be necessary to insure the overall success of the plan. These may include reorganization of departments, reassignment of faculty, restructuring of clinical requirements, and so forth.

Within the plan, we must also be careful to outline areas of congruence with institutional goals and objectives. This serves a two-fold purpose; it will allay administrative fears related to deviations from institutional goals and institutional mission; and, it highlights areas where resource allocations can be enhanced because they fund overlapping priorities.

The plan of action is intended to provide guidance for all those who are to be involved in the redesign effort, therefore, it is essential that it outline specific strategies for each component or phase. These strategies should be designed to lead to outcomes which are measurable. They should include identification of individuals responsible for implementing and monitoring them, as well as, timelines and specific resources to be allocated.

Identification of Facilitators

We have already discussed the need to involve, as actively as possible, all those who will be affected by the redesign process in the identification of problems, needs, and goals and objectives. As we move toward implementation of our plan of action, these individuals should be designated as members of task forces and/or committees which will be responsible for every aspect of the plan.

Also important, indeed critical to the success of the process, is the need to enlist these facilitators in the effort to effect attitudinal changes

among those who may feel threatened by the redesign effort. Internal conflicts must be resolved before implementation of the plan of action can be contemplated. The success of our redesign efforts may neccessitate redirection of institutional resources away from other schools, departments and/or programs. Fears which others have about economic cutbacks and loss of prestige must be resolved before proceeding further.

As with any human endeavor, the potential exists for us to rely too heavily on our own expertise and the insights of those with whom we are most closely alligned. A redesign effort of any magnitude should also be reviewed by external consultants and/or evaluators who can react objectively to program flaws. These individuals should be involved from the outset and we must have clearly delineated expectations regarding their input.

Identification of Resources

There are many goals which can be realized as the result of an investment of time, energy and talent. It is also helpful to have money. No redesign effort should ever be undertaken unless we have clearly identified what the cost will be in terms of both human and financial resources. In this regard, we must carefully calculate needs in terms of new funding to finance implementation of the plan of action: additional faculty and/or staff, staff and/or faculty development and retraining, and space needs.

Prior to developing the plan of action, we were careful to determine that this type of support would be forthcoming and we must now adhere closely to budgets developed for our project. By the same token, we should never undertake a major redesign effort on a meager budget because we will be insuring meager results.

Identification of Timelines

Timelines for implementation of the plan of action should be built into the plan itself. However, it is important to emphasize the nature of these timelines. If scrupulously adhered to, they can mark and measure progress so that all involved can have a sense that goals and objectives are achievable.

As timelines are being developed, they should be based on evaluative criteria for each phase of the plan: based on program goals and objectives. They can be used as guidelines in the development of data gathering strategies for each phase of the plan and to build in accountability for task forces, committees, evaluators and consultants.

Timelines are also essential if we are to re-evaluate the feasibility of the plan of action and restructure goals and objectives as necessary. That type of flexibility versus rigidity is essential to the success of the redesign effort. Those involved must feel that they are not locked in a specific timeline or course of action when common sense dictates another.

Evaluation of Change Efforts

The evaluation design which we develop will be one which uses the data base that we have established, involves those who have identified problems and needs, and, is based on the specific goals and objectives identified for the program. Of course we realize that evaluation is an ongoing process and that we should build into our plan of action evaluative criteria which can be applied to specific strategies for each component of the plan. However, it is important to design a summary evaluation which will weigh the impact of

the total program and measure its overall success.

External evaluators, who have been fully informed as to expectations for the program, should also be involved in designing this summary evaluation. Their expertise, coupled with feedback from all those involved in implementation of the redesign effort, should enable us to have a sense of the merits of the effort and dictate new directions for future endeavors.

Identification of Alternatives

While we like to assume that our efforts will have the desired outcomes, and most of them do, there are times, when, due to factors which we may or may not be able to control, our efforts do not meet with success. It is at that point that we must identify alternative strategies and begin the process anew.

Summary

Redesign of teacher education is not a process to be undertaken except in response to carefully identified goals and objectives. It is essential to involve, in every phase of the process, those who will be most affected by the redesign effort. Internal change strategies which have been used effectively at American colleges and universities include: identification of the problem, development of a needs assessment, design of a plan of action, identification of facilitators, identification of resources, identification of timelines, evaluation of change efforts, and, identification of alternatives.